

QRIS Dec. 12 Meeting Notes

Welcome & Introductions

- **Notice: This is the last/final meeting for the Ad Hoc QRIS group. Everyone was thanked for their hard work.**

Setting the Stage: It became apparent as Level 5 work groups met they wanted to influence previous/prior QRIS levels in order to set the stage for progressive quality. Discussion began with a review of the DRAFT QRIS proposal for Levels 1 – 4.

Staff qualifications:

Currently states staff must have credentials or equivalent. IDHS suggests removing the language “or equivalent”. Through RTT funding, resources will be available to support practitioners in attaining credentials stating “or equivalent” is not needed. Based on research, IDHS has found there is a significant number of professionals who meet/exceed credential requirements. We recommend removing “or equivalent” at Levels 2 and 3....leaving it at Level 4.

What about moving forward after RTT ends, will credential fees be in place again? This has been a significant barrier. Note: We could reassess fees at that time.

Due to credential process/time required for practitioners to attain credentials, should we put a phase in date on this e.g. it goes into effect July 1 of 2014 instead of July 2013?

Staff qualifications will be a push for many programs....it will push our staff to attain credentials. We feel it will take longer to get staff credentialed. Can we push it out further?

Note: These are not big jumps from our current QRS program. These are achievable goals.

How does NAEYC accreditation fit in with staff qualifications for Level 4? That might be an alternate route. Note: The NAEYC accreditation is higher than this level.

We keep dancing around the fact that in many programs, staff cannot meet these standards. We have to do two things: we have to say the goal is that child care needs to meet similar staff qualifications as required in PFA and Head Start AND carve out activities in RTT where we focus on developing strategies to support child care staff in attaining credentials.

Would like to create an alternate path for meeting staff qualifications at the Level 4 using Accreditation.....and then see how we can move away from that over time. Otherwise we will lose a huge chunk of the child care community. Can we move toward this by the end of the grant versus day one?

We have all been advocates for a long time in wanting a well-educated workforce: Bachelor degree teachers in every classroom. This is a vehicle to get us there. The quality of care is more important than a degree....but part of our reason is that we know educated staff link to increased quality.

Have Level 4 state NAEYC Accreditation could be an acceptable alternative up through a certain date...but that is not OK forever, and that people need to be getting degrees and credentials. This is incumbent upon us to make sure that this happens.

We need to be very intentional about identifying barriers for our workforce in attaining degrees and credentials and find ways to address those. Through Data collection – we can understand what the barriers are and what is preventing staff from getting credentials. It has taken Head Start 20 years to enact bachelor's degrees....we need to look at data, start changing processes and practices to get there. Clear end dates will help early childhood staff attain degrees and allow higher ed to build in additional courses as needed.

- **Alternative inserted at QRIS Level 4: until July 1, 2016 NAEYC Accreditation will be accepted as staff qualification validation. After this date, the NAEYC equivalency goes away and it is just the ECE Level 5. This is the only “or equivalent” accepted for Level 4.**

Both Head Start and PreK have had directives for staff in regard to qualifications, for child care we are talking about a group without as much of a formalized process.



Head Start is requesting assistance from Office of Early Childhood to move forward the request to Head Start Regional Office to accept/recognize Gateways to Opportunity Credentials as meeting HS/EHS staff education qualifications. The cross-walk and supporting documentation has already been submitted.

- **Revise staff qualification requirement at QRIS Level 4 to become an ITC Level 3.**

We also need to think administratively about how we will be implementing our QRIS program.....it is helpful to have all dates be the same from a marketing perspective.

- **Revise Director Qualification to become July 1, 2016 for consistency.**
- **ALL phase-in dates in document will be July 1, 2016.**
- **Remove “or equivalent” from Level 2 and 3 in relation to staff qualification/credentials. Use NAEYC as the “or equivalent” alternative for QRIS Level 4. Increase IT to Level 3.**

Group size/Ratio:

Licensing standards will be utilized at QRIS Levels 2 and 3. But at Level 4, we have strengthened ratios. It is very important to note that these ratios are to be implemented 100% of the time, not only during peak or at specific times during the day with the allowances from NAEYC. Standards as proposed will increase staff ratio ...but wanted another pathway besides NAEYC Accreditation for group size/ratio.....so added a paragraph that uses ITERS score and staff qualified as per IT Level 3 Credential AND a PAS score. (Note: these alternative routes - ITERS and PAS scores – are harder to meet than NAEYC Accreditation) List of accrediting bodies to be provided...and if NAEYC is the only one listed, then so be it. It provides an avenue for other accrediting bodies to be recognized.

- **Revisions: Average of 5 must be achieved on ITERS and there will be an “approved list for recognized accreditation bodies” that meet the QRIS Level 4 criteria.**

Note: Define how we are going to meet the ratio using NAEYC (not DCFS) language

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Practice

Work group wanted to include training requirements in earlier, and placed them at Level 2. Note: requirements are not about curriculum/training for staff as in ELL, but indicate a more general premise of

support for children using home language during play; additionally, “whenever possible” program communicates with families in their home language. There is not a big jump between Levels 3 and 4. But group felt this is so important that we want these things integrated at Level 3...not waiting until Level 4. It is clear we will need to create resource guides for programs....guides that inform parents of what they absolutely have to do to meet QRIS levels.

Do we want to insert “evidence based” language? Typically this is language used with curriculum and assessment. This entire row of criteria is not usually in a QRIS program as it is included in curriculum area.

- **Replace “strong” with “Evidence based” language.**

Research does show how to support one or two children with a language other than English Spanish etc. ERS is more about “stuff” in classrooms such as books, cultural play etc. so may not be as helpful as evidence.

Family & Community Engagement

Work group wanted to strengthen “community” aspect. At Level 4 would like to add that the program has a written plan for referral of children as appropriate other services. PAS item #19 also refers to this area and should be included.

- **Revisions: add “as appropriate” and add PAS #19**

Transitions

Family & Community Engagement work group felt strongly there should be a category related to transitions. At Level 2, this would incorporate training – perhaps into other trainings, does not have to be a stand-alone training. At Level 3, the program would provide general information and engage parents in discussions/activities addressing transitions. Should probably specify it is transitions into and out of programs (e.g. transitioning children into child care settings, how to support children/families in supporting kdg. transition from child care etc.) Forms/protocols should be in place that addresses transitions.

- *Note: The new QRIS website should have resources for each area....this is one way of supporting staff/programs.*

- **Transitions Area Approved**

OVERALL QRIS CONCEPTS:

- **CANNOT apply for Level 5 unless program has achieved a Level 4 – and programs must maintain Level 4 while they have their Level 5.**
- **Programs can apply for one or more Level 5’s.**

LEVEL 5 Preschool Teaching and Learning Excellence:

This was one of the most heavily research based areas and the work group chose to use the CLASS predominantly.

Should we add activity subscales? Work group did discuss this...our goal is to have 25% of PFA programs to be able to achieve Level 5.

Did you say there won't be any external trained assessor coming in for programs? A trained assessor will come in and do the CLASS. There's a whole list of things that should be in programs....but that will be done through a program self-assessment using ERS sub-scales. Then the external assessor (Quality Specialist) will do the CLASS in a random sampling. CLASS should also be utilized as the evaluative self-assessment tool. Note: We cannot afford to provide an ERS assessment for every classroom – there is no funding for this. Right now City of Chicago/Head Start programs do a CLASS and we need to use those assessment scores....those costs will not come from this grant as those processes are already in place. If you choose the ECERS at Level 4, or NAEYC Accreditation....then those work. For programs that have used NAEYC accreditation to achieve a Level 4, or used ERS...and have not yet done a CLASS, then we will have to pay for that assessment through this grant. For programs with 3 or more classrooms – will sample a portion. The goal is to have at least 25% of PFA and Head Start programs get this award.

Staff Development:

This area has overlap with Program Administration. This is logical in that there should be some overlap in these areas for higher levels of excellence. Preschool Teaching and Learning Excellence work group strongly felt that programs needed to meet staff development criteria in order to achieve Level 5/ Excellence.

“Or other Assessment” language might help support the fact that all tools aren't the same when you talk about Infants, toddler, preschoolers etc. The preschool level wants curriculum tied to assessments etc. Mixed age settings in child care makes a difference....however it is still appropriate to assess all children and use that in developmentally appropriate ways.

- **How could we develop a graphic that demonstrates there are “over-lapping” portions across the QRIS Level 5 awards? Some programs may go for all the Level 5's – others may apply for only one Level 5. However we need to assure between the various Level 5's there is consistency.**

Child Assessment

Child Screening

- **Sending back to work group both the “screening” and “assessment” sections.**

Special Needs & Inclusion:

We are starting with Level 5 awards to support discussion and understanding of Levels 1 – 4. The work group strongly felt these levels had to be connected and build on each other to be effective. So we will start with Level 5 and then work backwards, unlike with other groups.

Classrooms need to have balance and should be representative of the community. How can any program achieve a Level 5 without some assurance of a specific number of children are being served who have special needs? What if we said no more than 30% of children..35%....what about 5% minimum? Should that be revisited?

Clearly we are in agreement that a program needs to have guidelines/processes that support children with special needs. We have not undertaken the aspect that QRIS could be reworked to meet a 100% special needs classroom. But the vast majority of kids with IEPs in our state are in programs that are not all special needs – they are in a variety of settings.

The chart specifies that an on-site assessment by a “state approved assessor” would verify this. What qualifications? What training/background/expertise is needed by the assessor? This needs clarification.

We need a way of breaking this standard out: if you are a school district versus a child care setting, the documentation of planning meetings/notes will be very different. At any point in time, a program could have a lot of children at one age range (e.g. 2 year olds) with no children with an IEP or IFSP. So we need to think about how to reword.

This is about quality – how is the program supporting children with special needs? It is about how children are included, how program design is supportive, that the program is documenting/discussing/modifying as needed what they are doing.

Do we actually allow a program to receive a Governor’s award if they have not been able to get the local school or LEA to diagnose a child? Or what if they do not serve any children with a diagnosed disability? Should they actually get a Governor’s Award?

If there is **overwhelming evidence** that a program is working with their local school district/LEA and has done everything possible to get a child an IFSP or IEP....working with a specialist or their LEA...then those might be other routes of showing evidence. It is sometimes more effective for parents to work with private insurance and therapists versus public entities. We want those children acknowledged/included in this as well.

Spec Needs/Inclusion Levels 1-4:

Level 2: Requires administrators and all lead teachers to have training on inclusion of children with special needs.

- **If a program can achieve a Level 3, they do not have to prove they had trainings that are the requirement for a level 2.**

Level 3: have one requirement related to P&P...which really does not prove implementation of quality. And if the teachers have already received the training at Level 2, this is redundant and should be removed. Do we have other suggestions for Level 3 if P&P is not effective?

- All teaching staff must complete registry-approved training related to children with special needs.

If you do not have any children you serve with disabilities.....then the program should not achieve a Level 5 QRIS. Should they achieve a Level 4?

In a program with only 3-4 classrooms and 2-3 children with special needs, it is possible the assessor would randomly be assessing classrooms with NO children with special needs. Discussion as to whether a program MUST serve children with special needs in order to receive QRIS Level 4. Programs indicate the enrollment of children with special needs fluctuates. The way the ECERS is set up is that if you do not have a child with special needs it is rated NA. One possible solution is to have assessors automatically say the minimum score is 37 versus NA...that would resolve this for Level 3.

Head Start has always had the 10% requirement to serve children with special needs. But child care programs may not have the resources/ability to “force” school districts into assessing the child and gaining an IEP. So even if they serve a child with a disability, it may not be diagnosed.

Level 4 standard could be about requiring a MOU with Child and Family Connections and MOU with LEA by July 1, 2016. We would need to provide language to tighten the MOU so that there is consistency and understanding as to its purpose. Then at Level 5...we could add evidence of implementation of MOU or evidence that it is effective. This might be the only area where NAEYC accreditation does not really “get” the program anything.

1. What about for programs serving 50 or more children versus programs that are very small?
2. Head Start has a 10% requirement...but also a waiver process. So a program can demonstrate or really validate their processes were strong to reach out to/recruit children/families with special needs and were still unable to enroll a child with special needs.

What does it mean if you are a high quality child care program...private pay....and you have no children with special needs. Should you be able to have this QRIS Level 4 rating? Isn't this a way to ensure high quality programs indeed serve all children.....and intentionally try to enroll children with disabilities? We are asking people to be responsible for something out of their control...where parents choose to enroll their spec. needs child. It should be about demonstrating you have policies & procedures in place, you have an MOU with appropriate people/LEA; you have done outreach in the community, you have recruited and intentionally tried to reach out to ALL children and families. That should be sufficient documentation.

Would rather not focus on waivers and reasons why programs could not meet this ...and focus instead on ensuring strong policies/procedures and outreach is in place to support children with special needs. We are saying our programs need to reflect the community....which includes children with special needs. But we cannot “make” parents enroll their children in centers in order to help programs demonstrate a certain percentage of enrollment.

Decision: We need more data – we do not have an idea of the programs out there.....what % of programs are serving children with disabilities? We could put a % on that in the future....but probably should not put a minimum % out there as a requirement at this time. We need to ensure we can meet the intent and numbers we put in our RTT grant. We do not have sufficient data to make a decision. We will study this over time and think about whether we want to put a minimum in place in the future....not right now.

- At Level 3, **ALL staff should have training on special needs inclusion whereas at level 2 only lead teachers have had training.**
- **Programs must report annually on number of children with disabilities.**
- **By July 1, 2016, programs must have a written MOU with at least one LEA related to serving children with special needs.**

How will we ensure that a program at a Level 4 is not discriminating against children with special needs? We are asking the program to demonstrate in a variety of ways that they include children with special needs. We welcome, actively recruit, include and support. We are not setting a minimum number of children that must have special needs at this time...but will look at data moving forward.

Moving forward, how to we incentivize or look at model programs that include children with special needs? What are innovative programs doing? We need to go back and look at model programs, and how does accreditation fit in with special needs/inclusion?

Infant/Toddler

Recommendations – especially elated to group size/ratios – will be a stretch for every program, regardless of funding. The idea is that this would be achieved the majority of the day. So maybe this would be achieved 60% or 70% instead of 80% of the day. We recognize we don't fund sufficiently to meet this.

We need to remember that Level 5 is of sufficient intention and quality to help kids at most at-risk to be school ready...it is actually a type of intervention program. Research seems to indicate these lower child/staff ratios are critical. It will definitely require multiple funding streams to meet this level. Early Head Start....Educare....Prevention Initiative....those programs have a better (perhaps the only?) potential of meeting these ratios/requirements. Other programs don't have a shot at a Level 5.

Reduce group size at 15-24 months and not have a group of 12 (a group of 8). And have higher ratios 70% of the time.

- Holly & Theresa can work out suggestion and send out for input. Once all children are 24 months...could be group size of 10. 70% of the time there is another person in the classroom. This would still be a stretch but not be as unattainable.

If programs show individualized attention through ITERS and in other ways, then why is ratio so important? For most at risk....ratio is really important. For general population, ratio may not be as critical a piece.

- **Will rework this area**

Level 5 Linguistic and Culturally Appropriate Practice

Standard #4.....By 2020 the lead teacher must competently speak the primary language. (Note: more than likely it will be an assistant teacher as we know they won't qualify as a lead teacher. This is a high bar. Having a Teacher's Aide who speaks the language is the "easy way out". This would preclude that option by stating "lead teacher".)

- **Need to strengthen references to "culture" – this is focused on "language".**

Other credentials would be helpful that speak to supporting children's home language and culture.

- **Family Engagement and Cultural/Language at Level 5 need a lot of work.....possibly piloting. Need templates for Level 5....research cited, etc. before rolling out.**

Family & Engagement Level 5

These suggestions are able to be met by Head Start/EHS programs just by having compliance. Head Start has family and community outcomes which are really good...we could build on those.

The piece missing from Family & Community Engagement is how they are demonstrating engagement with isolated and most vulnerable families. Is this criteria/level based on how you engage families in your program...or about how to engage at-risk families? Should there be criteria about how engaged a family is within the program itself/how involved and supportive?

Do we want staff qualifications noted at a Level 5? The Family Specialist Credential is in development and won't meet timeline for implementation within this RTT grant.

How do we measure high levels of parent interaction? That is a different attitude than most child care centers have.

- ELC Family & Community Engagement Committee should have a larger discussion on criteria....then it could move back to the work group. Needs to be meaningful and say something about what is being done with families.

Parents/families need to be central to the conversation – young children do not come without the context/support of family. So Level 5 programs should really be able to show families as central to the program.

We are supposed to be talking about intervention for poor, non-white kids in urban/suburban settings. Let's say I want a five star program – and it is not available to me. Who are we creating this program for? If we keep saying programs are not likely to achieve the Level 5, then how is that helping the audience/children for whom this funding and qualify programming is intended? These Level 5 programs are only going to exist in areas where parents pay \$27,000 a year for child care. If we are going to move forward with a marketing campaign that tells parents a Level 5 is great....but then no programs are available with a level 5...what message does that send to parents?

We need to message that Level 4 is great/good enough for most kids. But we know that to make a difference for the most at risk – we want high quality programs. The RTT says...get the most at-risk kids in the highest level programs. Design a market-place program and advertise to all parents....and use it as a level to raise quality. The Level 5 is really an “add-on” of a very specific area of demonstrated high quality. These awards are for providers...we are laying out a way to say “if you really want to make a difference in the lives of children, then here is how you should design your program”. In some ways...we are using a middle class strategy to get to our most at risk families. So we are laying out a grid of how you get to good/high quality programs...and we need to recognize Level 4 is mostly where it is at.

Standard #3....if there is at least one child who speaks another language; the teacher must have an ESL endorsement or have had training.

- **Will look at the BUILD report.....**
- **Create general parameters and then send out to committee? What about a transition piece?**

1. Gaining agreement on the intent of Level 5 Awards of Excellence - needs to be furthered/finalized.

Public systems want to fund programs for at-risk children. We want to direct resources to our most at-risk children. Children who need high-quality programs are everywhere. Programs that aspire to the highest levels of quality are everywhere.